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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions: (1) Does the Ames Philosophical Belief Inventory (APBI) assess the philosophical position of counselor trainees?; (2) Are counselor trainees' behavior in practicum sessions consistent with their philosophical positions?; and (3) Are the philosophical positions of counselor educators consistent with the descriptions by their students? The APBI was administered to 24 students in a counseling practicum and to six members of the staff. Audio tapes of counseling sessions for each student were submitted for analysis of philosophical position. Each student was also interviewed. Results indicated: (1) the high degree of agreement between the students' APBI scores and verbalized (interview) philosophical position suggests the APBI accurately assessed philosophical positions of 20 trainees; (2) little difference exists between measured philosophical position and counseling behavior; and (3) faculty scores are not consistent with student perceptions. Further research will be aimed at determining if counselor educators are important variables causing students to shift their philosophical positions. (EK)

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PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION AND COUNSELING

Charles W. Ryan and John Butzow

Understanding of one's philosophical position and relating this to counseling are formidable tasks. For counselors, there are five different ways of philosophical understanding. They are the philosophies of realism, idealism, pragmatism, phenomenology, and existentalism. The case for the ability of this group to represent on a rather wide continuum the major philosophical positions in counseling has been documented by the work of Arbuckle (1958, 1960); Cribbin (1955, 1954); Curran (1960); Durnall, Moynihan, and Wrenn (1958); Hardee (1953); Mowrer (1957); Patterson (1958); Chenault, (1968); Rogers (1951, 1961); Shoben (1961); Ames (1968); Dey (1969); and Kratochivil (1969). Beck (1963) has compiled an extensive bibliography of significant work that further supports our contention of the importance philosophical understanding has for counseling practice. The literature is replete with research that describes the ideal personality for the counselor. However, we believe that little attention has been given to the philosophical position held by the counselor, and in particular how this is expressed in the counseling interview. Furthermore, it seems imperative that assessment of one's philosophical belief could lead to insight regarding the operationalizing of philosophy in counseling. Knowledge thus acquired could lead to variation in training, with greater emphasis on philosophy in Practicum and Introduction to Counseling.

Guidance and counseling has moved from amorphous, prescriptive, and nondirective periods to the current emphasis on phenomenology and existentalism (Beck, 1963), with some blurring between the latter three. However, the same transition has not occurred in counselor selection if the variety of systems and procedures practiced in

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various graduate schools are indicative of our research efforts to date. It is the position of this research paper that accurate determination of the counselor trainees' philosophical position immediately after acceptance will lead to personal insight and development that enhances future counseling effectiveness. The counselor's philosophical position will affect his relationship with clients, interactions with colleagues, and his success in the school or university environment. Philosophy asks questions and examines factors of reality and experience which are important variables in the counseling process. This study was conducted to determine which characteristics of the Ames Philosophical Belief Inventory lend themselves to use in training of prospective school counselors. More specifically, we sought to answer the following questions:

1. Does the APBI assess the philosophical position of counselor trainees?
2. Are the counselor trainees' behaviors in practicum counseling sessions consistent with their measured philosophical positions?
3. Are the measured philosophical positions of counselor educators consistent with the description provided by their students?

A study of this design and purpose is limited in several respects. We could not examine all possible belief systems and were restricted to the dominant philosophical positions in counseling. Some of our colleagues will take exception with the philosophies included in this study, and the omission of others. However, our choice was influenced by the need for instrumentation that reflected a broad continuum of philosophical positions and the Ames Philosophical Belief Inventory (APBI) met this criterion.

In searching for data to illuminate these areas of concern, we were guided by the following model (see Figure 1). Our research efforts were geared to develop and explore the relationship between expressed and measured philosophical positions,

as held by counselor trainees and the impact on counseling practice. The model depicts a complex series of interactions between composite staff philosophical belief, counselor trainee position, and articulation of these positions via course work, counseling practicum, and student-faculty advisor relationships. Figure 1 is a schematic representation of the interaction between philosophical position as held by counselor trainees, counselor educators, and clients.

Insert Figure 1

What exactly does this mean? Does the existentalist counselor develop his counseling approach based upon a predetermined vision of what he would like the client to be? Some critics imply that this is not only what existentalists do, but also a weakness in their counseling approach. We do not have an accurate picture of what is intended by the existentalist counselor. Quite frankly, we know that the Realist counselor is an excellent diagnostician, but as Patterson (1966) states, existentalism has a lack of technique, and seems to be more of an attitude about Man and his potentiality.

Idealism states that there are absolute standards by which man can test his desires, but in the final state of decision making he is bound by the knowledge that reality is tied to a unity of spirit-mind over individual uniqueness. In essence, the client is bound by limits on action or choice to the same degree as the counselor. Hence idealistic oriented counseling must help the individual clarify and interpret these limits or absolutes as they relate to his freedom and others.

Thus it is suggested that the philosophical position of a counselor is derived from a number of factors in his background and professional training. It is suspected that the philosophical position which the counselor trainee articulates

will be an important ingredient in his success as a counselor.

METHOD

During the Spring of 1969, the Ames Philosophical Belief Inventory (APBI) (Ames, 1968) was administered to 24 students (17 males, 7 females) in a graduate level counseling practicum at the College of Education, University of Maine (Orono). The counselor trainees were asked to submit one audio tape of any counseling session of their choice to serve as a specimen of their counseling behavior. It was expected that they would submit a tape of their best counseling.

The counselor trainees were divided into two groups and interviewed by both of the investigators. The interviews were semistructured and included the following response stems:

1. Describe your philosophical position.

2. The counselor trainee was given a copy of Ames's descriptions of the positions: Realist, Idealist, Pragmatist, Phenomenologist, and Existentialist. They were asked, "Which of those statements best describes you? What is it about_____ (the position named) that attracts you?"

3. The interviewee was shown his Ames's Profile. He was asked, "Do you agree with the Ames's description of you?"

The audio tapes of counseling practice were analyzed for evidence of the various philosophical positions by both of the investigators simultaneously listening to a five-minute sample of the counseling session. One five-minute excerpt was randomly selected in the middle of the counseling tape and rated on a five-point scale. Each investigator scored the tape for each of five possible manifestations of philosophical position. The following Philosophical Behavior list was developed after key references from each of the five philosophical positions were reviewed.

1. Realist Behaviors:

   a. Gathers interpretable data from client.
   b. Persuades client to change behavior to become more self disciplining.
   c. Predicts verbally possible client behavior.
   d. Explains to client how he, the counselor, solves problems.
   e. Changes client's environment.

2. Idealist Behaviors:

   a. Verbalizes societal goals as absolutes.
   b. Brings client to seek the truth and avoid error.
   c. Seeks to elicit client's feelings of anxiety.
   d. Directs the client towards his spiritual welfare or the good life.
   e. Directs the client to endure suffering with dignity.

3. Pragmatist Behavior

   a. Asks client to describe experiences.
   b. Helps client to identify casual agents.
   c. Helps client discern and verbalize his behavioral patterns.
   d. Verbalizes several hypotheses.
   e. Forces client to try out solutions that may reduce tension.

4. Phenomologist Behaviors:

   a. Builds a strong relationship.
   b. Allows client to clarify.
   c. Reflects and interprets client's information.
   d. Helps client explore attitudes and feelings.
   e. Asks client to direct the interview.

5. Existentialist Behaviors:

   a. Uses variable counseling techniques.
   b. Accepts client's needs and supplies indicated stimulation.
   c. Avoids behavioral mechanisms.
   d. Changes content emphasis if probing seems imminent.
   e. Focuses client on his attitude toward his problems.

The manifested philosophical scores of each counselor trainee were determined by averaging the raw scores provided by each investigator as he scored the tape. To assure consistency in scoring, the investigators reviewed each philosophical category for meaning and discussed them to acquire a common frame of reference. A pilot scoring session was conducted on three audio tapes and the results compared for inter-judge agreement. Subsequently, the remaining sample tapes were scored using the Philosophical Behavior list; the obtained percentile scores revealed no

difference between the judges. The counselor trainee's manifested position was judged to be that which received the highest total score.

In addition, each counselor trainee responded to a short questionnaire that provided the investigators with biographical data. This information was scanned for significant experiences that would provide further insight into the philosophical beliefs of the counselor trainees. Educational experiences, family background, and vocational aspirations play a vital part in the development of personal beliefs.

The APBI was administered to six members of the counselor education staff and scored for determination of their philosophical position. Each counselor trainee was asked on the questionnaire to state what he believed the philosophical position of the counselor educator who taught his course in Introduction to Counseling to be. This data was analyzed for inferential material that would be of help in curriculum development and counselor training.

RESULTS

In Table 1, the two highest APBI percentile scores, the verbalized (interview) philosophical position, and the manifest score for counseling practice are given for each counseling practicum student who participated in the study. This data provides the basis for answering questions one and two given above.

1. The relatively high degree of agreement between the students' highest APBI scores and verbalized (interview) philosophical position suggests that the APBI accurately assessed the philosophical position of 20 out of 24 counselor trainees. When the frequencies of the specific verbalized philosophical positions are compared with the students' highest APBI scores a chi-square of 3.9 for 4 degrees of freedom is obtained. Therefore, differences between frequencies of APBI score categories and the frequencies of interview named positions were not significantly different at or beyond the 0.05 level.

2. Further examination of the data in Table 1 shows little difference between measured philosophical position and manifested counseling behavior in a sample of counseling practice. When the categories of phenomenology and existentialism were combined, there was no difference between these two measures of philosophical position at or beyond the 0.05 level, that is, no difference between frequencies of APBI positions and frequencies of manifest position. Chi-square was 0.75 for 3 degrees of freedom using N = 22. Those tabled results show a large response cluster for APBI scores in the existentialist category, 15 of 22 subjects. Also a large cluster, 15 of 22 subjects scored in the phenomenological category for counseling practice. This trend suggests that these counselor trainees are intrigued by the Existential position but in reality practice a phenomenologically oriented technique. In part, this trend may have been caused by the emphasis on attitude that the Existentialist counselor must have toward man and a lack of precise counseling techniques inherent in such a position. It does seem to suggest a lack of consistency between technique and philosophical belief on the part of these counselor trainees. One could also speculate that the sample group could not behaviorally differentiate between the phenomenological or existential positions, but were attracted by the "freedom" that existentialism purports to offer.

In Table 2, the APBI scores of the counselor education staff are compared to the counselor trainees' description of their philosophical positions. In this table the "students" refers to those who had the particular staff member as instructor in their introduction to counseling course.

Insert Table 2 here

While there are too few observations to use statistical comparisons, it seems that the faculty members' APBI scores are not always consistent with student perceptions of their positions. One notable exception was staff member F, whose APBI scores were almost equally high for phenomenology and existentialism and whose students perceived him as expressing one of those positions with equal frequency. It appears that we cannot answer the question of whether students can perceive a faculty member's philosophical position unambiguously. It would seem that only in certain cases is this possible. Staff member C was perceived to be expressing three different philosophical positions to four different students.

DISCUSSION

In view of the findings reported here, it is essential that a <u>new</u> look be given to the matter of philosophical training in programs of counselor education. We suspect that Arbuckle's argument is tenable in light of these findings. Arbuckle suggests that the "counselor should be a model, not so much to be imitated (far too many people are nothing but day imitations of others) as to be an example from whom a client can learn to develop his own self (Arbuckle, 1969, p. 22)." If these counselor trainees are <u>typical</u> of those entering the profession then it is essential that their philosophical understandings be deepened with more intensive study of philosophy. Our findings indicate a shallowness in preparation and comprehension of the main streams of philosophical thought, especially existentalism. It would be difficult under these conditions to be a model if one does not understand his own value system. As Strickland states, "...increased understanding of philosophical, theoretical, and methodological orientations also provides greater understanding of counseling relationships (1969, p. 174)."

Is it possible to use the APBI for counselor selection? Unless the program of training is to be restricted to candidates who espouse one particular philosophical position, it is not recommended that the APBI be used in selection. However, we

believe the APBI does have potential for helping the counselor trainee sort and define his philosophical belief system. If the APBI were used in conjunction with a course in counseling or philosophy of guidance it would aid the trainee in assessing his counseling goals. Also, the counselor trainee could determine through content analysis of his counseling tapes the philosophical orientation of the interview sessions and whether imposition of counselor beliefs upon the client are occurring. As one member of the study group stated, "The way you conduct yourself is important, because it would be hypocritical for me to be functioning this way and feeling that I believe this way and find out that I'm not really this kind of person at all." As many of the sample stated, "It is difficult to really verbalize my philosophical position." We suspect that counselor trainees want more help from counselor educators in developing a solid philosophical understanding as it relates to counseling and guidance practice.

The existentialism statement was difficult for the counselor trainees to understand and accept. Some felt it expressed a pessimism which held a little hope for the freeing of man to meet his potentialities. For the reader's benefit the statement is presented here for your assessment and critical thought.

> Existentialist: This person views people as seeing the world in their own distinctive way with no two persons perceiving the world and reality in the same manner. This person believes that one's environment generally determines one's behavior. A person's behavior is not seen as a matter of his free choice; one can be helped to better understand his perceptions of his environment (Ames, 1968).

The matter of free choice was not understood with referent to existentialist thought. Sartre (1947) explains that man is free, but choice making and action are indispensable actions for the mature person. By choosing or making choices one is making decisions for <u>all</u> mankind and this demands responsible behavior. If anything, existentialism demands that man act responsible and meet the challenge of life with commitment. In respect to the Ames's statement our sample group felt restricted

if a person had limited free choice in regards to his own behavior. They also interpreted this to be a limiting factor on the behavior of the counselor and was more prescriptive than freeing the individual to examine his goals and choice-opportunities.

Those members of the sample group scoring in the Idealist category were quick to point out that "they had never had a course in philosophy, but believed in absolutes." It seems that some counselor trainees were attempting to implement an Idealist-Phenomenologist philosophy in their counseling practice. We were asked by several of the students if this was legitimate counseling practice. It was more relevant for the investigators to infer that high scores in all of the five categories could lead to pragmatic behavior in the counseling situation. The form or direction of the counselor's help could then be labeled directive or nondirective only if the counselor trainee had scored high on either end of the APBI continuum. What the profession needs are precise procedures to help the counselor trainee determine his philosophical position and implement it in counseling.

To summarize, we have found the APBI to be more reliable than an interview in assessing a counselor trainee's philosophical position. However, we have encountered two distinct difficulties in this matter. First, some counselor trainees were unable to understand their APBI profile because of inadequate philosophical background. Second, the APBI requires too much administration time to be utilized practically. A values inventory made up of direct statements, rather than 250 indirect statements may elicit the same data more efficiently.

The general trend in our counselor trainee sample was to act consistent with some philosophical position. For these counselor trainees it was difficult to explain why they acted in certain ways. These trainees found it difficult to accurately describe their philosophical position or belief. What we do not know is how much of their counseling behavior was determined by interaction with a particular counselor educator. Future research efforts will be aimed at gathering data to determine if

the counselor educator is an important variable that causes students to shift their philosophical position.

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TABLE 1

A SUMMARY OF STUDENTS'
PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEFS DATA

	APBI SCORES			
STUDENT'S NUMBER	HIGHEST %ILE	SECOND HIGHEST %ILE	INTERVIEW POSITION	MANIFEST SCORES %ILE
1	E 96	I 95	E	---
2	E 76	E 64	E	Ph 75
3	R 98	I 60	R	Pr, Ph 55
4	E 100	I 60	E	Ph 90
5	E 97	Pr 76	Ph or Pr*	Ph 88
6	E 94	R 75	E	Ph 85
7	Pr 91	R 67	Pr	---
8	E 95	Ph 69	Pr*	Ph 80
9	E 97	R 96	Pr*	Ph 70
10	E 100	I 53	E	Ph 67
11	E 88	Ph 53	E	Ph 65
12	E 100	I 37	E	Ph 67
13	E 91	Ph 91	E	Ph 78
14	Ph 98	E 88	Ph	---
15	E 98	I 46	E	Ph 80
16	Ph 90	Ph 61	Pr	Ph 65
17	Pr 91	Ph 69	Pr	Pr 92
18	E 94	Ph 56	E	R 57
19	Pr 82	E 77	Pr	Ph 67
20	E 100	I 65	Ph*	Pr 58
21	E 99	Ph 74	E	Ph 85
22	Pr 94	R 81	Pr	Pr 45
23	E 97	R 76	E	---
24	Ph 82	I 50	Ph	Ph 78

N=24 *Denotes interview positions not in agreement with APBI. Philosophical positions are R, Realism; I, Idealism; Pr, Pragmatism; Ph, Phenomenology; and E, Existentialism.

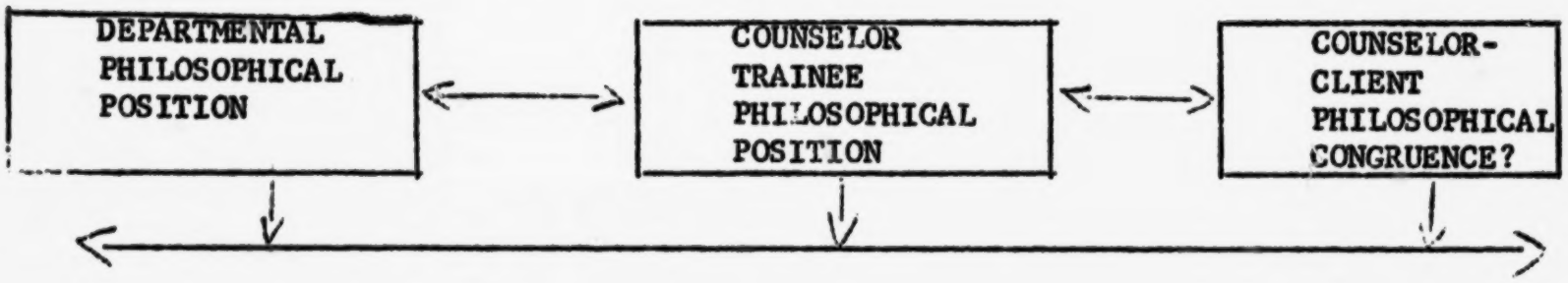
TABLE 2

APBI SCORES FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION STAFF
AND COUNSELOR TRAINEE PERCEPTION OF STAFF
PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

STAFF MEMBER IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION	APBI SCORES (PERCENTILES)	COUNSELOR TRAINEE PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION	
		NUMBER REPORTING	POSITION REPORTED
A	R 29, I 10, Pr 76, Ph 15, E 99	---	---
B	R 100, I 95, Pr 35, Ph 2, E 8	1	E*
C	R 26, I 34, Pr 79, Ph 58, E 62	2 1 1	R Pr* Ph
D	R 84, I 5, Pr 36, Ph 78, E 88	---	---
E	R 32, I 30, Pr 90, Ph 64, E 43	---	---
F	R 61, I 51, Pr 11, Ph 73, E 74	5 5	Ph E*

N= 15 Counselor Trainees.
* Letters refer to philosophical position as identified by student.

FIGURE 1
PHILOSOPHICAL INTERACTION MODEL



COUNSELOR TRAINEES - PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION		COUNSELEE'S PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION	COUNSELING OUTCOME
PHILOSOPHY	PRACTICE		
EXISTENTALISM	PERMISSIVE	REALISM	CLIENT REJECTS COUNSELOR'S PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION
IDEALISM	DIRECTIVE	IDEALISM	CLIENT ACCEPTS COUNSELOR'S DIRECTIVE OR INTERPRETATION

Figure 1. Represents a philosophical interraction model showing reciprocal relationships between philosophical positions of counselor trainees, counselor education department staff members and counseling clients. Positions of existentialism and idealism are included as examples of the possible interractions.